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UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000103

SIPDIS

NSC FOR MICHELLE GAVIN AND LINDA ETIM  
AU FOR AMBASSADOR BATTLE  
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PASS TO AMEMBASSY MALABO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/02/10

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SUBJECT: Debrief of Chadian President's Visit to Khartoum

REF: N'DJAMENA 0086

CLASSIFIED BY: REWhitehead, CDA, STATE, EXEC; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Sudanese Presidential Advisor Dr. Ghazi Salah Eddin, met with Charge on February 10 to review Chadian President Idriss Deby's February 8 and 9 visit to Khartoum. Ghazi characterized the visit as a "breakthrough," and said that the formerly icy relationship between Deby and Sudanese President Bashir had thawed considerably over the course of the visit. He said that Deby was clearly sincere in his desire to patch up the relationship with Sudan and had been open not only to the agreed joint military presence on the border, but to cross border development projects as well. The Mission favors U.S. involvement in this effort. End summary.

¶2. (C) Dr. Ghazi requested a meeting with the Charge prior to Ghazi's return to Doha on February 10 to discuss President Deby's just-concluded visit to Khartoum. He termed the meeting a major breakthrough and said that in his 40-minute private meeting with Deby, he was fully convinced of the Chadian President's sincerity about restoring a peaceful relationship with Sudan. Deby told Ghazi that he was aware of the negative effects of the quarrel with Sudan on both the people and military forces of Chad. Oil resources were gradually dwindling, and Chad could not continue to devote unlimited resources to the security sector. As an example, he noted that the Chadian army had swollen in size from 18,000 to 60,000 troops, a major financial drag on the GOC.

¶3. (C) Charge remarked that the body language at the Deby's airport arrival ceremony had not been particularly brotherly. Ghazi agreed but said that the strained atmosphere had dissipated during the first day, terminating with a genuinely friendly evening session in which the two presidents spoke jointly with Qadaffi, President Mubarak, King Abdullah and two other heads of state. Ghazi, who wryly observed that his first approach to the Chadians had been met with widespread skepticism in Khartoum, said that he was greatly relieved by the clear political will on both sides to repair the damaged relationship.

¶4. (C) To Charge's query about a timetable for establishing the joint military mechanism, Ghazi said this would not take place until he had returned to N'djamena with military and security officials to hammer out the details on border controls with Chadian counterparts. He conceded that both countries might be open to outside assistance once the parameters were set. He said that the timing would largely depend upon Sudan, which was engaged in Doha and was about to plunge into the election campaign.

¶5. (SBU) Ghazi said that he thought Chad and Sudan were at the point of ending their bilateral problems once and for all, with economic as well as political ramifications. He said they hoped for Saudi funding to transform unimproved sections of the road from Port Sudan to Abeche into an all-weather route. This would open an east-west corridor across Africa from the Red Sea to Dakar, with obvious economic benefits for both countries. On a more modest scale, the presidents had agreed to pursue smaller, practical cross border water and solar projects. They had already spoken with Egypt and Libya about funding and would probably look elsewhere. Ghazi noted that even USD 100,000 could go a long way toward making things better in the impoverished border regions.

¶6. (C) Comment. Ghazi was as upbeat as we have seen him over the last six months. The successful outcome of the Deby visit has silenced the skeptics and strengthened Ghazi's hand as he works the intractable Darfur political process. We judge the visit as a significant step toward delinking the troubled bilateral Chan-Sudan relationship from the quest for a solution in Darfur, but we will continue to keep a close eye on the activities and location of Sudan's Chadian rebel proxies in Darfur. Trust but verify.

¶7. (SBU) Comment continued. We recommend that the USG seek concrete ways to support the ongoing rapprochement between Sudan

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and Chad. We would favor providing equipment that could be used to monitor the border, as long as it is demand-driven and accepted by both sides. We would also favor the provision of small grants for cross-border development projects, assuming that existing sanctions legislation would allow.

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